

June 2025

# TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 60<sup>th</sup> year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



**AB 'Eye of Excellence'**  
(Tasco, 2020)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,  
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2024

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## President's Message

My last blooms have evaporated with 'Gypsy Lord' and now it's time to survive. How do you get your iris through our summer's intense sun, heat, and eventual humidity? More water, less water, shade, mulch, or something else? I'm going to try a light mulch on some of my sparser plants to maybe keep the soil a little cooler. Make some observations, keep some records, and share your results. Stay cool and see you at our rhizome auction in August.

- Kevin Kartchner

*"It is the month of June, The month of leaves  
and roses, When pleasant sights salute  
the eyes, And pleasant scents the noses..."*

- Nathaniel P. Willis

## Upcoming Events

July - no meeting. Newsletter will continue

August 9: 1 PM, Tucson Botanical Gardens. TAIS Rhizome Auction, one of our few members-only events

September 13: 9 AM to Noon. TAIS Rhizome Sale at Harlow's Gardens nursery, 5620 E Pima Street. Set up Sept 12

October: TAIS Annual Photo Contest - start choosing and editing your best photos! Limit = 15

## Birthday Wishes to:

Rebecca Hill

Christy Lewalski

Paul Guengrich

Olive Modello



*Iris germanica*

Source: Curtis Botanical Magazine

# Report from the Luncheon



May 10 - Nineteen members and a guest celebrated TAIS' 60th Anniversary with a luncheon at the clubhouse in Bonnie's neighborhood, perched high atop a hill in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains. Kevin brought over a dozen vases of irises to decorate the tables and countertops. Bonnie made centerpieces for the tables, featuring sparkly hummingbirds and butterflies.

Food from Baggins was joined by a cake which showcased our 60th Anniversary logo. Everyone received gifts from the club: a hand trowel with an easy-grip handle and a crystal ornament featuring the anniversary logo.

After lunch, Kevin presented a slide show highlighting the history of TAIS and featuring photos of several members who are no longer with us. One of the slides showed irises from the garden of a friend's aunt who is 110 years old. This photo was accompanied by a quote: "You don't stop growing irises when you get

old. You get old when you stop growing irises." He passed out questionnaires and we interviewed and learned more about one another. Many members grow irises because their mothers and/or grandmothers grew and loved them. We learned that Sam has been a member since 1977!

Terry awarded certificates to Kevin for The Queen of Show iris and for Tall Bearded Sweepstakes and to me for Artistic Sweepstakes and Best Design of Show. Kevin bestowed Iris Bucks upon himself, Cathy, and me for our blue-ribbon-winning entries in the Show. He will present Iris Bucks to the other blue ribbon winners at our next meeting: Susan, Pat, and Dan.

Thank you to the 60th Anniversary Committee of Linda, Bonnie, and Kevin for all of their decisions and preparations! It turned out great!

- Sue Clark, secretary

Happy 60th  
Anniversary  
TAIS!



**We're on the web:**  
**[Tucsoniris.org](http://Tucsoniris.org)**

## Our Logos were Designed by Shane Smith

Shane Smith, son of Dave Smith and me, created a visual identity package for TAIS last year. A two-time engineering graduate of UA, Shane describes himself as "an eccentric person with eclectic interests, one of which happens to be graphic design." He's one of those people who is both artistic and scientific. Microscopy and learning to play the



piano via YouTube are other interests. He even has several clumps of irises in his yard.

Shane started by asking Dave and I for several adjectives about the club, then prepared designs in different styles to see what appealed to us. He next offered several more-refined designs. We chose one and asked for a few adjustments. He created a whole package, which included, among others, the logo at the top of p. 1 and the badge design above. Two fonts were recommended, as well. - SC



## 60th Anniversary Luncheon - photos by Dave Smith





## Treasurer's Report for May submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

BEGINNING BANK BALANCE 11,825.91

### INCOME

Dues 15.00

### EXPENSES

Show 736.80

60<sup>th</sup> Anniv 261.25

Trek 696.87

AIS Dues 15.00

TOTAL NET (MINUS ) 1694.91

**ENDING BANK BALANCE 10,130.99**



Above: 'Babbling Brook' (Keppel, 1965) from the Dykes bed. This one would enhance the colors of both pairs of irises in the right column, as well as the red iris at the bottom



From top: 'Under My Spell' with 'Golden Panther,' 'Noble Lord' with 'Blazing Beacon' (all Tasco irises) and 'My Little Wagon' (Valenzuela, 2012). Photos by SC

## Marcusen Sculpture Garden in Prescott

Dave and I ventured to Prescott on May 19 to take photos of irises. We've been making this day trip for several years now, and this year we spent all of our time at the Marcusen Sculpture Garden within the Yavapai College grounds. Well, minus taking time out for lunch at El Gato Azul, our favorite eatery in Prescott.

We did not know what to expect after the reports of the garden being partially destroyed last summer, probably by thirsty animals, - rhizomes disappeared, irrigation was ripped out, and even labels vanished. But it looked wonderful. The irises were in peak bloom, as they typically are about week or so after Mother's Day. They are planted and tended by members of our sister club, the Prescott Area Iris Society, and they steal the scene from the ten resident sculptures during bloom season. Besides a plot with all of the Dykes-winning irises, this garden features beds dedicated to Arizona hybridizers, including TAIS member Margie Valenzuela. Some of the other hybridizers include Don Shepard, Francelle Edwards, and Rick Tasco, whose Superstition Gardens used to be located in Mesa. The Tasco beds were lush and gorgeous on the day that we visited.

I keep myself organized on these trips by photographing a flower and then photographing the plant marker beside it. This year, we found ourselves drawn more to eye-catching combinations than to single varieties. A particular favorite: Tasco's Dykes-winning 'Golden Panther' was stunningly enhanced by the smoldering darkness of 'Under My Spell,' with its velvety ruffled-and-chocolately petals. Another combination we liked was 'Noble Lord' and 'Blazing Beacon,' also bred by Tasco. (see photos).

PAIS member Judy Book indicated that the Dykes bed will be relocated across the path to a sunnier location and that other beds will be replenished. - SC



## More from the Iris Show - photos by D Smith & S Clark





**TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2025****Kevin Kartchner - President****Cindy Long - Vice President****Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account****Jim Wilcoxon – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary****Pat Olsen & Sally Vega - Programs & Places****Diane Pavlovich - Publicity****Cindy Long and Linda Briggs - Hospitality****Bonnie Else & Susan Schaefer - Door Prizes****Taffy Holvenstot - Membership****Dave Smith - Photographer****Sue Clark - Newsletter****What to do in the Iris Garden during June:**

**Maintenance:** Monitor soil with moisture meter and water irises when it reads close to dry. Evening watering is best at this time of year. Be sure to water the soil and not the fans, or they will “cook” in the heat. Check for aphids and other pests. Remove pests, weeds, and debris. Update or create a map of your iris beds and containers in case labels fade or disappear. Sharpie labels will fade! Replace faded labels. Remove spent stems near base using scissors to avoid damaging the rhizome. Move pots to shade. Add 40% shade cloth to irises in beds.

**Organic care:** Feed with fish emulsion every other week and with feather meal and alfalfa meal (or alfalfa pellets) monthly. Apply humic acid as desired.

**Non-Organic care:** No fertilizer required till fall.

- SC

**Tip Exchange**

Idea - Perhaps we could wear visors with our club logo on them during the Sale and Show to make our members more visible to the public. - SC

Dave and I are running drip lines to our irises for the summer with Raindrip adjustable emitters set on low. They will run for two min/day, as recommended by Cathy. - SC

**Iris Limerick**

There once was a man named Harden  
Who tended a very fine garden.  
He grew 99 irises  
And lots of papyruses.  
Such was the garden of Harden.

- Sue Clark

**Did You Know?**

What might grow in a Chocolate Garden? Chocolate-scented flowers such as [Chocolate Cosmos](#) and [Chocolate Daisies](#), aka Chocolate Flowers or Lyreleaf Greeneyes. There is even an orchid that smells like chocolate: [Heaven Scent 'Redolence'](#). Dark-colored vegetables: Chocolate Cherry Tomatoes, [Dakota Chocolate Black Corn](#), and [Mini Chocolate Bell Peppers](#). An herb or two: Chocolate Mint actually smells and tastes like both of those flavors, as does [Chocolate-scented Pelargonium](#). Next month: chocolate irises. - SC Sources: [Herb Society blog post](#), [Plantophiles](#), and the links above



Swan Lake Iris Garden

Source: Southern Living

"I wonder what it would be like to live in a world where it was always June." - L. M. Montgomery

**A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History**

Sometimes a failure turns into something extraordinary. Hamilton Carr Bland created a private fishing retreat for himself in Sumter, South Carolina in 1927. At the same time, he landscaped the grounds of his nearby home with Japanese irises, which failed miserably. He consulted with various horticultural experts, finally instructing his gardener to dig them all up and toss them into the swamp. To his astonishment, they bloomed the next spring, and this “happy accident” led to a premier botanical garden. Besides one of the most intensive plantings of Japanese irises in the United States, Swan Lake Iris Gardens is inhabited by all eight species of swans and numerous other water birds. A neighbor, Mr. A. T. Heath, deeded adjacent land to the city with the caveat that Mr. Bland develop it into additional gardens. Over 120 varieties of irises explode into bloom from about mid-May into early June in this 150+-acre garden. In the middle of May each year, over 100 thousand visitors descend upon Swan Lake for a three-day Iris Festival, which has been named one of the Southeast's top-rated events. Although the dinner-plate-sized Japanese Irises and swans are the stars, other features of this free event include a “Taste of the Gardens” food festival, live music, a car show, craft show, and activities for children. Volunteer positions are available.

The park, located about 40 miles from Columbia, is also an arboretum with over 100 species of trees and 172 types of plants, including camillas, daylilies, and Japanese magnolias. Sculptures, a Sensory Trail, Butterfly Garden, Rose Garden, Azalea Garden, and a Chocolate Garden round out the offerings. And it all started with one great big happy accident! - SC

Sources: [The Japanese Iris](#), 1990, by Currier McEwen, published by University Press of New England for the Brandeis University Press, © by the Japanese Iris Society; [Swan Lake Iris Gardens | City of Sumter, SC](#); [Swan Lake Iris Festival](#); [Visit Swan Lake-Iris Gardens](#); [Swan Lake Iris Gardens - Wikipedia](#)